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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 001633

SIPDIS

FOR CJCS ADM MULLEN FROM AMBASSADOR;
JOINT STAFF FOR LTC BERRIER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/10/2028
TAGS: PREL, MARR, GG, IZ, TU
SUBJECT: CJCS VISIT TO TURKEY

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

1. (S) The timing of your visit to Turkey is ideal. The President's commitment in November to provide enhanced intelligence against the PKK immensely strengthened US engagement here. But we are now at some pivot points:

-- in Turkey, a new CHOD and DCHOD, both critical people for our work on a range of issues here;
-- in Iraq, a new MNF-I commander, the SFA and its related

documents, and upcoming changes in US troop deployments;
-- in the Caucasus, a new test to stability and security
literally at Turkey's doorstep; and
-- fresh fears about Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Domestically, Turkey got through the AKP closure crisis without a political breakdown. Civil-military relations now seem at least adequate. As we frame US-Turkish dialogue toward 2009 and beyond, your talks here can serve to convey a sense of our strategy, reassure Ankara of senior-level USG interest and understanding, and enlist help where we need it.

2. (C) PM Erdogan, President Gul and CHOD General Basbug will all express their commitment to US-Turkish ties and NATO, as well as appreciation for cooperation on the PKK that Basbug last month labeled "perfect." As DCHOD and Turkish lead at our HLDG in 2003-05, Basbug was a friend. At his August 28 change of command ceremony, he said that one of his most important responsibilities is to ensure that US-Turkish cooperation continues. Basbug is a tough intellectual, a student of military history and civil-military relations. We hear he plans to keep TGS-government policy differences more private than Gen. Buyukanit did. Basbug has observed that force alone cannot defeat terrorism; economic, social, diplomatic and other means are needed. To back this up, he visited the southeast in his first week as CHOD and studiously listened to Kurdish NGO leaders on the complexities of politics, economics and terrorism.

PKK/Iraq

3. (S) Real-time intelligence provided to TGS through our Combined Intelligence Fusion Cell has fueled almost 100 cross-border strikes against the PKK in northern Iraq since November. Basbug has suggested that the PKK may be near the breaking point and that this winter may be decisive. However, fighting and attacks within Turkey are on their annual, late-summer/early fall rise in the southeast, Istanbul, Izmir, Mersin and elsewhere. If the usual PKK flow back to northern Iraq occurs later this fall and/or if large-scale PKK attacks within Turkey occur, pressure for a land operation will rise, but it is just as likely that air, artillery and possibly Special Forces strikes will remain the tools of choice.

4. (S) Our work to implement the POTUS/Erdogan undertakings on the PKK was with Generals Buyukanit and Saygun and their TGS staff. Basbug stayed out of it, though Land Forces artillery under his command firing on the PKK surely

benefited from it, as did his new DCHOD, Gen. Igsiz, who just came from command of the army on the Iraq/PKK front. It will be helpful for you to convey:

- the interest you, Gen. Cartwright, Gen. Craddock and Gen. Odierno have in similar (or better) collaboration with Basbug and Igsiz;
- our expectation of continued respect for the notification/deconfliction understanding that works well;
- concern that out-of-the-ordinary steps, such as another land incursion, be thoroughly reviewed with us well in advance (as happened last February); and
- the suggestion that Turkey and we need to talk through the implications of Baghdad's assertiveness, our likely future troop posture and the SFA for Turkey's work in Iraq and our support of it.

5. (S) You may also wish to urge continued efforts with Baghdad, Erbil and in the southeast by Basbug and the government. Ankara remains frustrated by KRG inactivity against the PKK; less direct engagement with it will not

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create incentives for action. Turkey proposed a mil-mil cooperation agreement to Iraq. The Iraqis are ignoring it, and the Turks aren't pushing very hard, either. Finally, you should note to military and civilian authorities our concern about extending Air Cargo Hub operations at Incirlik past December 31. Inability to use Incirlik will be harmful to US-Turkish relations and our work in Iraq.

Georgia/Caucasus/Russia

6. (S) Events in Georgia reminded Turks they are NATO's front line in the Caucasus against Russia, on which they depend for 3/4 of their natural gas. Turkey is deeply concerned about the prospects for more instability or revived East-West confrontation, does not see much strategy from the West, and will not want to be tougher with Russia than others. Despite misgivings, Turkey approved all our ship transit and Global Hawk support requests and rebuffed Moscow's complaints it was bending Montreux to suit us. Since Georgia, Turkish authorities have not reprised their whines about US aims in the Black Sea, but they do not want problems. The mantra U/S Bill Burns got here September 5 was that out of crisis come opportunities. Ankara's new efforts with Armenia and attention to Nagorno-Karabakh reflect this.

7. (S) The Turks will likely highlight their commitment to working with the US and NATO in support of Georgia, reaffirm their support for Georgia's territorial integrity, promote their Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform, and ask about our plans. They want reassurance that we will work within Montreux and that we are not seeking confrontation with Russia.

Afghanistan/Pakistan

8. (S) The Turkish MFA told Bill Burns September 5 that it is not optimistic about Afghanistan: too many armed groups, too many areas of increasing Taliban influence, and too little work to win hearts and minds. Gen. Saygun complained to Gen. Cartwright in July that NATO needs a new strategy, more emphasis on training and equipping the Afghans, and a substitute livelihood for drugs. Turkey recently pledged an additional \$100m in economic aid, supports expansion of the ANA (including via training in Turkey), and has pledged two OMLTs, but has not budged on additional forces for ISAF or taking on combat roles. Turks are very concerned about recent developments in Pakistan.

9. (S) You may wish to review the results of recent discussions in Washington, Kabul and elsewhere about Afghan strategy and Pakistan. You should urge more support now for the ANA, help to the Afghans as they consolidate control over greater Kabul security, and additional forces for ISAF. Perhaps there is a nice way to turn Turkish questions and complaints about NATO's failures into an admonition that while we appreciate past leadership of ISAF and on-going engagement, Turkey needs to provide more commitment and force if NATO is to succeed.

Other Items

10. (C) Other items of note.

-- Cyprus: The first comprehensive talks since the Annan Plan's failure in 2004 began September 3. Difficult issues and red lines abound, but initial signs are good. It would be helpful for TGS publicly to embrace the UN-led talks and to affirm support for the kind of Turkish troop withdrawals envisioned in Annan if a suitable overall package is negotiated.

-- NATO/EU: You know the NATO OPLAN problem and Turkey's

beefs (Cyprus and EU/ESDP stiff-arming of Turkey). As in Afghanistan, there need at a minimum to be practical, on-the-ground arrangements among elements in Kosovo. We believe the long pole in the tent is TGS.

-- HLDG and Future US-Turkish Mil-Mil Cooperation: Our PKK

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efforts have revealed serious Turkish interoperability and capability gaps. Short-term, our ODC responded to pleas for help to develop offers of attack helicopters, a manned ISR platform and a Predator capability for Turkey -- only to watch the civilian procurement process here gum things up and our efforts languish. Longer-term, we have promoted the idea of a forward looking security cooperation plan with the Turks. Its target: developing the allied military capabilities Turkey needs to face upcoming challenges to NATO and bilaterally (counterterrorism, counter WMD, energy security, etc.) in ways that ensure interoperability and compatibility with US and NATO systems. Your mention of this to Basbug will help get TGS buy-in ahead of staff talks to prepare the HLDG, which could then be elevated from gripes about slow licensing and third-party transfer restrictions to a more appropriately strategic cooperation.

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WILSON